

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 67.—THIRD SERIES.

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 1890.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

### A RED SISTER.

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#### CHAPTER I.

"HERE we must part, my friends," said the priest, resting his hand on the stile which divided the high road from a foot-way running across fields. "This must be the 'short cut' of which the innkeeper spoke. It will be easy enough for me, with only this light bag to carry, to make the rest of my journey on foot."

The speaker was a tall, dark man, between fifty and sixty years of age, with aquiline features, and clear, penetrating grey eyes; the persons whom he addressed were a man and a young girl. The former was standing beside a dog-cart, with his hands still grasping reins and whip; his healthy, bronzed face, and his appearance generally, seemed to denote that he belonged to the small-farmer class. The girl, who was standing beside the priest on the foot-way, bore a rather more refined appearance. She was small and slight in figure, her face looked worn and anxious, its pallor being thrown into greater relief by the deep crape she wore; her large, grey eyes had a forlorn, far-away look in them; her hair was of a beautiful, though colourless fairness.

"I wish we could be of more service to you, Father Elliot," said the young man; "we owe you a heavy debt of gratitude——"

He broke off abruptly, giving a furtive glance towards the girl.

"Thanks, my good friend," said the Father, cheerily; "I was delighted to be

able to break my long journey at your house. I hope times will soon be better for you. There's something egregiously wrong in the state of a country when a farm, worked as yours has been, can't pay its own expenses and yield a comfortable income to two plain-living people like you and your sister."

Then he turned to the girl:

"Where was it you applied for a situation as maid? I don't think you mentioned the name of the people or the house."

"The lady is Lady Joan Gaskell, wife of Mr. John Gaskell, the millionaire coal-owner, of Longridge Castle," said the girl.

Here a sudden change of expression swept over the Father's face; his lips parted, as if about to speak, but no words escaped them.

"Longridge Castle is just behind that clump of trees," she went on; "but the trees hide it so that you can't see it till you are close up to it."

The Father had by this time recovered himself.

"Ah, well," he said, "if you succeed in obtaining the situation, I shall see you on Sundays at mass, for St. Elizabeth's is only a mile and a half distant from the Castle."

He turned as he finished speaking and crossed the stile, then, resting his arms on its topmost rail, bent forward, and for a moment keenly scrutinised the pale, sorrowful faces which fronted him.

The young man led his horse and cart forward a little. He knew that the priest's last words were to be spoken now, and they were not words to be thrown on the empty air.

The Father smiled kindly at him.

"Don't lose heart, Ralph," he said.

"Be diligent—remember, you can put conscience even into driving a plough—put your best work into everything you do, and, sooner or later, a blessing must follow."

Then he turned to the girl.

"And you, my child, whether your lot be cast in Longridge Castle or elsewhere, be zealous in the performance of your religious duties. Thank Heaven that nothing more is required of you than loving trust and child-like obedience, and make no effort to discover that which, providentially no doubt, has been hidden from you."

His last sentence was said with a slow emphasis. The girl sharply turned her face away from him as if she shrank from the scrutiny of his keen though kindly eyes. Her fingers twisting nervously one in the other showed that she was greatly agitated.

"Once more, good-bye, my children both," said the priest, after a moment's pause.

He stretched his hands towards them as he pronounced his blessing; then turned, and began rapidly to make his way along the footway through the fields.

The brother and sister had bowed their heads reverently.

"Come, Lucy," said the man, turning his horse's head and preparing to set off once more along the dusty high road.

Lucy did not reply. She stood motionless in the blazing sunshine, shading her eyes with her hands, and watching the retreating figure of the priest.

"Come, Lucy," called her brother again, and this time a little impatiently, "we shan't be back any too soon if we set off at once. I've a hundred and one things to see after when I get home."

A bend in the footpath he was following hid the priest from her view, and Lucy, letting her veil fall over her face, rejoined her brother.

Father Elliot steadily pursued his road. The surrounding country was not particularly picturesque. It was flat, as if a gigantic steam-roller had passed over it, and but scantily wooded. The only point of interest in the landscape was the clump of distant elms, behind which Lucy had said stood Longridge Castle.

As the Father drew near to the clump of not very ancient trees, he could catch glimpses of the frontage of the newly-built, many-towered edifice.

"It is fatality," he thought. "Here am

I, exiled from London and the work I was doing there, and thrown, as it were, into the arms of these Gaskells once more. My superiors tell me, forsooth, they are sending me out of the way of temptation. 'Through pride,' the Cardinal wrote, 'the angels fell. Your pride in your powers of oratory and the large and intellectual congregations which you draw, is leading you to preach doctrines other than those which have been taught by the Church in all ages. Go now and minister to the poor and ignorant colliers and cottagers, and, by plain teaching—not the preaching of doctrines which spring from the exercise of a subtle intellect—win souls to the Church.' Yes, those were his words. I know them by heart. The exercise of a subtle intellect! Is it that, I wonder, or the exercise of clear vision and common sense which leads a man, after staring for years at the problems of life, to cry out from his pulpit, 'My children, purgatory is present, not to come; this world is not our first start in existence—here we are sent for our sins——' "

Here the Father suddenly paused, passing his hand over his brow. Thoughts such as these required curb and rein.

"Ah, well," those thoughts presently resumed, "submission to my superiors is one of the first of my duties, and I submit. They little know how valueless to me is the praise or blame of the multitude. All things are to me shadows and hollow mockeries of what might have been!" Here his eye for a moment rested on the façade of the Castle as it gleamed white in the afternoon sun, between the shadowy trees. "Thirty years," he went on, bitterly, "and I have not been able to kill the memory of what 'might have been'! Thirty years of battling with the ghosts of that past, and then I am sent as it were to banquet with them—to entertain, and be entertained by them! Joan, Joan, I wonder if your memory is clear and strong as mine is to-day! I wonder if, when we meet, you will shake hands calmly as with an utter stranger, or if you will start up and cry aloud, as you did on the day I cursed you for breaking faith with me, 'Go away, Vaughan, go away, and never let me in this life look upon your face again'!"

These were the priest's thoughts as he made his way across the fields towards the cottage which represented the Parsonage of St. Elizabeth's Church. At this point, however, his visions of the past seemed

suddenly to goad his footsteps into a speed prohibitive of thought.

A countryman at that moment swinging back the gate of an adjoining field, in order to drive home his cows for milking, stood, open-mouthed, gazing at the tall, dark gentleman approaching at such a rapid pace.

"Be 'ee goan to th' merry-makin'?" he asked in broad Yorkshire dialect, in response to the Father's passing nod and greeting.

"I'm making for St. Elizabeth's Parsonage—Father Bradley's house; I dare say you know it," said the Father, resuming his usual calm, frankly-courteous manner, which always seemed to open hearts towards him. "What merry-making is taking place to-day? Where is it?"

"Wa-ay down yonder," answered the man, jerking his head towards the Castle which had conjured up such a tumult of memories in the Father's mind. "Th' old master's turned ninety to-day, and there isn't a soul far or near but what's to be the better for his living so nigh upon a hunderd; so Muster John—that's his son—says."

"What!" cried the priest; "is old Mr. Gaskell still alive?"

He paused a moment. "Joan, Joan," his thoughts ran during that pause, "you've had to wait long enough for the good things for which you sold yourself!" Then aloud to the man he said:

"How far do you make it from here to the Castle?"

"A short half-mile as the crow flies. But the merry-makin' is i' the fields you'll come upon just after you've passed the heath; that's about a quarter-mile from here."

And then the man went on to say that the whole country for miles round had turned out to do honour to the non-agenarian's birthday; that the village was deserted; that, after dark, bonfires were to be lighted, and fireworks let off; that there was to be a supper for the collier lads, and a dance for them afterwards; in a word, the birthday celebrations were to out-rival those which had taken place some seven years ago, when the young master had come of age.

All this Father Elliot listened to attentively, saying never a word until "the young master" was mentioned. Then he put a question as to who this young master was.

"He's Muster Herrick, the son of

Muster John and Lady Joan," the man explained. "Muster John married nigh upon thirty year ago the Lady Joan Herrick—she came of grand people down South, somewhere. She was poor enough she was, and she's nae sich a kindly body as——"

"Good day, my friend," here interrupted the Father, brusquely. "Your cows are straying—see. I'm right for St. Elizabeth's Parsonage, you said?"

The man went after his cows; the Father went on his way once more, his brain filled now with so many phantoms of the past that the country through which he passed was a blank to him.

He seemed to see himself once more in the pretty Devonshire village, where his father had been rector as long as he could remember. He could see, also, as vividly as if days, not decades of years, had since passed; his constant playmate and companion by his side, the Lady Joan Herrick, only daughter of the Earl of Southmoor. Now they were scampering over breezy moors together on their rough-coated little ponies; anon, they would be bending over their books side by side in his father's study; or, he would be angling in the Southmoor trout stream, while she, on the bank, sat listening to his ambitious hopes and projects to win name and fame for himself in the Church by his learning and oratory. He could picture himself, also, a little later on, a young fellow of twenty, starting on his college career, and Lady Joan, a handsome girl of fifteen, bidding him God-speed. The scene changed, and he seemed to see himself, four years after, returning from college and about to enter the ministry, standing hand-in-hand with Joan, praying her to wait for him till he could make a home and position in life which he might fitly ask her to share, and hearing in reply her vehement promises of unswerving constancy.

Last scene of all, he could picture himself, some three months after this, alone, face to face with Joan, hearing from her own lips the story of her betrothal to John Gaskell, the only son of the millionaire coal-owner. He could hear her calm, passionless voice trying to prove to him how much better it would be for him to begin his career unfettered by a wife, and how unsuited she was for being the wife of a poor man. He could hear, too, his own vehement denunciations of her falseness and worldly wisdom; and then her one bitter cry—startled out of her, as it were,

by his angry words—"Go away, Vaughan, go away, and never in this life let me look upon your face again."

Well, they never had looked upon each other's face again. She had left her Devonshire home to take her place among her husband's wealthy, if parvenu, relatives; and he, after drifting aimlessly about the world for years, had joined the Roman Church, and had qualified for the priesthood. And then life, like a great ocean, had rolled in between the two.

Here a sudden break in the path which the Father was following compelled him to give a truce to his memories, and consider which road it behoved him to take.

The country through which he had passed had gradually been growing flatter and less verdant, proclaiming in its general aspect the propinquity of the coal-country. He was standing now on the edge of a wide heath—not the wildly-beautiful expanse of purple heather and golden gorse which is frequently associated with the name, but a bleak, stony, treeless waste, with here a stunted juniper bush, there a straggling bramble. On the left it was bounded by a low, scrubby hedge, on the right it stretched away endlessly to where, against a night-sky, the sullen, red flare of furnaces and forge-fires would show. A second thought told him that his way lay in a direct line across the very middle of this waste.

Straight ahead of him Longridge Castle showed plainly enough now, and distinct sounds of cheering and shouting proclaimed that he was nearing the fields where the birthday festivities were taking place.

Half-way across the heath, Father Elliot paused to note a deep pit, possibly a shaft which had been sunk in search of coal, and which was protected only by the slightest and most inadequate of hand-rails. The grass growing up its sides, the tangle of nettles and weeds which covered the mounds of earth thrown up beside it, showed that many a spring had passed since it had been dug. Prompted by a boyish instinct, the Father took up a stone and threw it into the pit. The seconds which elapsed before it sounded the bottom told of the formidable depth of the hole.

"It would be an ugly business to cross this heath on a dark night," thought the Father, as he once more went on his way.

This led him now along a narrow road with high hedges on either side. After five o'clock in the afternoon, towards the end of

August, the sun's rays begin to slant, and shadows to lengthen. This road looked cool and shady by comparison with the treeless heath. Through the break in the hedge on one side he could catch a glimpse of bright-coloured flags and white tents in a not very distant field. The sounds of a military band greeted his ear, together with a hum and buzz of voices as of many people assembled.

"In the midst of that crowd," he thought, "will stand Joan with her young son, her elderly husband, her ancient father-in-law. I wonder, if I suddenly presented myself among them all, if she would turn pale and shrink from me as a ghost at her banquet, or would she come forward and greet me in that stately way of hers I used to know so well? I can't fancy Joan without her stateliness. I could as soon fancy her without her voice! That will ring in my ears when I lie on my death-bed—soft, deep, musical, and slow in speech, the voice of a woman who should have had a heart. Yet Heaven, in place of a heart, planted a stone in her bosom!"

Sounds of footsteps on the other side of the hedge, almost at his elbow, at that moment arrested his attention. Through the intervening greenery, bushy here, scanty there, he could catch a glimpse of the small, slight figure of a young girl approaching with rapid steps. She was evidently making for a gate which, about twenty yards further on, led from the field into the road.

The Father reached this gate just at the moment that the girl was passing through it.

Her face attracted him strangely. It was of a type he knew well enough. Scores of times he had seen it, painted by different hands; now as that of baby cherubs on the panels of triptychs; anon as that of ascending and descending angels on some gigantic altar-piece. It was round, child-like, with a tiny cupid's bow for a mouth, and such brilliant gold on the hair, such forget-me-not blue in the eyes, and such rosy tints on cheeks and lips it seemed as if the sun must be shining full upon it, in spite of the protecting shade of a big sun-hat. It seemed a face formed for happiness, innocence, and a perpetual round of childish pleasures! and lo! there were traces of tears on either cheek.

The Father was touched. He accosted the young girl.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I am a stranger here; will you kindly tell me if I

am in the right road for St. Elizabeth's Church? I am the newly-appointed priest. I take Father Bradley's place there."

The girl's manner matched her face, it was frank yet shy, as a child's can be at one and the same moment. The sound of tears in her voice jarred upon the Father like a false note in a sweet, gay melody.

"I am going towards St. Elizabeth's now," she answered. "I will show you the way with pleasure."

## CHAPTER II.

SOUNDS of hearty and prolonged cheering fell upon Father Elliot's ear, as, under the guidance of his young companion, he made his way along the road towards St. Elizabeth's.

"It's the health-drinking," the girl explained. "They do it heartily. They think there never was such a master as old Mr. Gaskell, although, I suppose, no one there can remember him at his best."

"There never was such a master!" Those words, or their equivalent in broad Yorkshire, went the rounds among the collier lads, as, with throats hoarse from their shouting, they put down their empty tankards.

This health-drinking was the event of the day, and it was drunk, one fashion or another, at the same moment, by every member of the Gaskell family, and every man, woman, and child on the Gaskell estate. Immediately after the ceremony had been gone through, old Mr. Gaskell was to withdraw from the festivities, farther excitement being deemed injurious to him at his advanced age.

In the field where this health-drinking took place, Gaskells of three generations—father, son, and grandson—stood side by side. There, immediately in front of a bright-coloured silk pavilion, which had been specially erected for him in the midst of the meadow, stood the old man, supported on one side by his son John—a fine, soldierly man of fifty-five—on the other, by his grandson, Herrick. A frail, shrunken figure—with pallid, wrinkled face, and scant, silver hair—he showed between these two stalwart men.

Herrick owned to as many inches in height as his father, although to considerably less in width; an agile, muscular young fellow he was, with straight, clean-cut features, an abundance of dark-brown hair, and full-pupilled, grey eyes. There was no need to proclaim his relationship

to the tall, stately lady who stood a little distance apart, on his left hand. The most careless observer would have said, "mother and son, not a doubt," when once they had seen the two faces in profile.

In voice, in manner, in graceful walk, and easy carriage of the head and shoulders, the likeness between the two was not less remarkable.

"I can't picture Joan without her stateliness," Father Elliot had said to himself, when trying to draw a fancy-portrait of his old love as time had left her after thirty years of wear and tear. He did not stand alone; all who had ever known her could as lief have pictured a star without its light as Lady Joan without that "grand manner" of hers which kept alike friends and foes at a ceremonious distance, and which, if she had been dressed in homespun, and had been compelled to feed off wooden platters, would still have proclaimed her every inch the aristocrat.

In Herrick this stateliness had been somewhat modified by education and circumstances, but still it was there. Though he worked as hard as his father in the management of the colliery, and of the estate generally, there was not a collier lad or farm labourer on the land who would have approached him in the easy, off-handed manner in which they approached his father, sturdy democrats though they were to their very marrow.

With physique and manner, however, the likeness to his mother came to an end. A veritable Southmoor he might be in appearance, but in heart he was a Gaskell. His interests and hopes in life were identical with those of his father and grandfather; and he cared as little for the accidents of birth and rank as possible.

Now as Lady Joan watched his face kindling into sympathy with the bright, ruddy faces around him, and heard his clear voice joining in what seemed to her coarse and vulgar cheering, she said to herself, bitterly:

"He has some of the best blood of England in his veins, and he is at one with such a crowd as that."

The cheering had scarcely died away, and the hum and buzz of broad north-country dialect begun, when Herrick, turning to Lady Joan, hurriedly asked:

"Mother, where is Lois? Is she tired? Has she gone indoors to rest?"

Lady Joan's brows contracted into a frown.

"Lois!" she repeated, coldly.

"Yes, Lois White, the young lady I introduced to you and left in your charge while I acted as umpire in the next field."

"I beg your pardon. The introduction was so hurried I did not catch the young lady's name. She left some little time ago. She said she must get back to her pupils. She is nursery governess somewhere in the neighbourhood is she not?"

The young man did not notice her concluding sentences.

"Left," he repeated, blankly. "You let her go without telling me! I drove her here; of course I intended driving her back to Summerhill. I don't understand it," and he walked hurriedly away in the direction of the stables as he finished speaking, leaving his mother to conjecture that he meant there and then either to drive or ride after the young lady in question.

Before, however, he could carry out his intention, a note, brought over by one of the smart young pages at Summerhill, was put into his hand.

It ran as follows:

"I have gone home with a bad headache. Come and see me to-morrow morning.  
"L. W."

#### CHAPTER III.

LADY JOAN stood watching the retreating figure of her son, the frown on her brow deepening. Her husband's voice, loud, ringing, cheery, suddenly interrupted the train of her angry thoughts. He was returning thanks for old Mr. Gaskell.

"My father wishes me to thank you, my friends," he said, "for the hearty manner in which you have drunk his health. He bids me say that such a day as this is worth living ninety years to see, and to the last hour of his life it will live in his memory. One with you in heart he has ever been, and one with you in heart he hopes to be to the end; he can never forget that where the Castle now stands there once stood a little farm-house in which he was born and reared. Finally, he bids me say: 'God bless every one of you, and give you, one and all, lives as happy and prosperous as his has been.'"

Prolonged and hearty cheering followed the close of the speech. As it died away John Gaskell whispered a word to his father; an order was then given, and a bijou pony chaise was brought round. A little, grey, apple-faced man came forward fussily. He was old Dr. Scott, the village

practitioner, to whom the Gaskells paid a good yearly income for his daily attendance on the nonagenarian. He on one side, John Gaskell on the other, assisted the old gentleman into the pony carriage which stood waiting to take him back to the house.

Lady Joan's lip curled slightly.

"It would have been far less trouble to have taken him up in their arms and have lifted him in," she said to herself. "To think that the opinions and whims of a man in this stage of incapacity should be law in a household, and that men like John and Herrick should bend to it! It is simply incomprehensible!"

A message brought to her by a servant a minute later accentuated the bitterness of the thought.

"Mr. Gaskell wishes to know, my lady," said the man, "if you have given directions for the presentation picture to be at once hung in the drawing-room, so that the subscribers may have the pleasure of seeing it on the walls before they leave."

This "presentation picture" was a large painting of the identical farm-house to which John Gaskell had just alluded, and which had stood on the site of the present castle before the lucky finding of coal on the land had brought gold to the family coffers, and had turned a pretty pastoral district into a grimy, manufacturing one.

The painting had been made, on a considerably enlarged scale, from a small water-colour sketch of the old house, taken before it was pulled down, and had been presented as a birthday offering to old Mr. Gaskell by the colliery workmen.

The look on Lady Joan's face as the servant delivered his message might have been understood to say:

"I heartily wish the picture were behind the fire."

She did not, however, give expression to the thought. To "kick against pricks," to her way of thinking, was objectionable, less for the pain it might bring than for the loss of dignity it involved. So she replied merely:

"If it is to be placed there, no doubt your master has already given the necessary orders." And mentally she added: "Henceforth the drawing-room will become unpleasant to me by reason of the plebeian reminiscences that picture will perpetuate."

It was not that Lady Joan could, by any chance, ever have been guilty of the essentially plebeian offence of endeavouring to

disguise the mushroom-like origin of the Gaskell family. On the contrary, she was in the daily habit of laying stress upon it in her correspondence with her own well-born relatives. All she asked was, that in her own home, in the rooms in which she was compelled to pass her daily life, the fact should not be perpetually flourished before her eyes as a thing wherein to glory.

That very evening there was to be a dinner-party at the Castle. Certain guests would be there whom nought but the patrician presence of Lady Joan could have tempted within the newly-built walls. The enormous painting, hung in a conspicuous position, would set flowing a stream of talk as to the luck and money-making qualifications of the Gaskell family, a stream whose tide she knew well enough neither Herrick nor her husband would make the slightest effort to turn.

This dinner had already been a sufficient cause of annoyance to her, in that it had been fixed at a ridiculously early hour, in order that old Mr. Gaskell, who dared not attempt to sit down to table, might see and shake hands with certain of the guests before he retired to his room for the night. It was hard to have its annoyances doubled and trebled in this fashion.

Annoyances such as these were of almost daily occurrence in the Castle, and Lady Joan knew that so long as old Mr. Gaskell had breath in his body there was no likelihood of their coming to an end.

In heart, she bitterly rebelled against the supremacy to which John and Herrick so willingly bent their necks.

"If I had known," she would sometimes say to herself, "that for close upon thirty years I should be condemned to play a strictly subordinate part in the Gaskell household, that my notions on important matters would be persistently ignored, and that this old man would live on to keep alive in the country the recollection of the newness of the gold which built the Castle and supplied its luxuries, I might have thought twice before I married John Gaskell."

But, though thoughts such as these ran as a steady under-current to the surface of her life, her manner towards the old man expressed nothing but a stately, calm indifference.

That stately calm of manner, however, had gone nearer to a collapse on the day of the birthday festivities than it ever had before. Perhaps Herrick's eccentric con-

duct, in forcing upon her notice a young lady whose existence she had hitherto steadily ignored, might have been held responsible for the fact.

Lady Joan's maid, as she assisted her mistress to undress that night, thought she had never before seen her look so like the harassed, hampered mistress of a large household, fretted by many cares and responsibilities, so unlike the stately lady who kept all trivial and uninteresting matters—and people—at a ceremonious distance.

The girl thought she might never get a better opportunity for preferring a request she had just then very much at heart, and seized it accordingly.

She had, however, to repeat her request once and again, before its full import reached Lady Joan's preoccupied mind.

"Oh, you would like me to see the young person who wishes to come as maid!" at length said "my lady," indifferently. "It seems to me you are in a great hurry to leave."

The girl blushed, and began hesitatingly to explain:

"I told you, my lady, that Robert wanted to get married at once, now that he has been promised one of the new cottages, and——"

Lady Joan cut short the plebeian details.

"Is this young person who wishes to come—I forget her name—likely to suit me? You know my requirements."

"Oh yes, my lady. Lucy Harwood is her name. She is highly recommended, and she is neat, and pale, and thin, and quiet-looking, and doesn't speak broad Yorkshire; she comes from Devonshire."

The girl had hurried through her speech, anxious to get to her final words, which she knew would considerably enhance the possible attractions of the new maid in Lady Joan's eyes.

"From Devonshire!" Lady Joan repeated. "What part of Devonshire?"

"Her father, my lady, at one time lived within a few miles of Southmoor. He is dead now; and her brother, who has a farm near Wrexford, can't make it pay, so she is obliged to go out and get her own living. Will you see her, my lady?"

"Harwood," repeated Lady Joan, slowly, "and her father lived within a few miles of Southmoor. I can't recall the name. Yes, I will see her to-morrow morning directly after breakfast."

And then she dismissed the whole

matter from her thoughts; for, to her way of thinking, a maid was not a creature like herself, who could love or hate, rejoice or be sad, but just a detail of daily life, needful, but uninteresting, like the clocks which wanted winding up, or the fires which needed replenishing.

### CONNUBIAL BLISS AND BACON.

PROBABLY few old English customs are better known, even now, than that of the "Dunmow Flitch," which, it is supposed, was first given by Robert Fitzwalter, a favourite of King John, when he received the Dunmow Priory, some time about the beginning of the thirteenth century. He, however, is not allowed by all to have this distinguished honour; for some there are who incline to the belief that the monks of the Priory, who resided there before Fitzwalter's time, were the first to inaugurate the custom, and intended it more as a joke than as a serious matter. Be that as it may, the custom did undoubtedly exist, and has been handed down in poem and prose from one generation to another, the later generations having the shadow of the substance that sometimes fell to the lot of their forefathers of loving, domesticated temperament.

Mr. G. A. Walpole, in his "New and Complete British Traveller," published, I believe, early in the eighteenth century—the title-page is missing from my copy—says the custom began in the reign of Henry the Third, and, quoting from the "late Mr. Hearne of Oxford," says:

"Robert Fitzwalter, Earl of Oxford, became a great benefactor of this place (Dunmow), and instituted a custom that if any man, within a year and a day of his marriage, did not repent or have any difference with his wife, during the first twelve calendar months, he was to kneel down before the Prior on two sharp-pointed stones, and swear to the truth of the following oath (given in full elsewhere) as administered to him by the Steward of the Priory, which, if he did, a gammon of bacon was given to him."

The "Book of Days," arguing that it originated as a joke, says:

"What makes it more remarkable is it rose in connection with a religious house, the Priory of Dunmow, showing that the men who then devoted themselves to prayers, could, occasionally, make play out of the comicalities of human nature. The

subject of the jest here was the notable liability of the married state to trivial janglements and difficulties, not by any means detracting from its general approveableness as a mode of life for a pair of mutually suitable persons, but yet something sufficiently tangible and real to vary what might otherwise be a too smooth surface of affairs; and, anyhow, a favourite subject of comment, mirthful and sad, for the bystanders, according to the feeling with which they might be inclined to view the misfortunes of their neighbours. How it should have occurred to a set of celibate monks to establish a perennial jest regarding matrimony, we need not enquire, for we should get no answer. It only appears that they did so. Taking it upon themselves to assume that perfect harmony between married persons for any considerable length of time was a thing of the greatest rarity, they ordered, and made their order known, that if any pair could, after a twelvemonth after matrimony, come forward and make oath at Dunmow, that during the whole time they had never had a quarrel, never regretted their marriage, and if open again to an engagement, would make exactly that they had made, they should be rewarded with a flitch of bacon. It is dubiously said that the order originated with Robert Fitzwalter, a favourite of King John, who revived the Dunmow Priory about the beginning of the thirteenth century; but we do not in truth see him in any way concerned in the matter, beyond his being a patron of the Priory, and as we find the Priors alone acting in it afterwards, it seems a more reasonable belief that the joke from the first was theirs."

There is yet another authority, Dr. Brewer, who, however, goes even further back, and attributes the foundation to "Juga, a noble lady, in 1111, and restored by Robert de Fitzwalter, in 1244."

The earliest mention of the Dunmow Flitch, in any work, is, I believe, in the *Lansd. MS.*, 416 (about 1445), a metrical paraphrase of the Ten Commandments, now in the Bodleian Library, in which the following reference occurs:

I can fynd no man now that wille enquire  
The parfyte wais unto Dunmow;  
For they repent hem within a yere,  
And many within a weke, and sonner, men trow;  
That cawsith the weis to be rowgh and over grow,  
That no man fynd may path or gap.

The Dunmow bacon is also alluded to in the "Visions of Pierce Plowman," and

in Chaucer's prologue to the "Wife of Bath":

The bacon was not fet for hem, I trow,  
That some men heve at Essex, in Dunmow.

So much for the various authorities as to the institution of the "prize"; now, as to the ceremony and means of obtaining it. I have detailed the form of application already. While the claimants were kneeling on the sharp-pointed stones in the churchyard, solemn chanting and rites were performed by the inhabitants of the Convent. After this, the following oath was administered by the Steward:

You do swear by custom of confession  
That you ne'er made nuptial transgression;  
Nor since you were married man and wife,  
By household brawls, or contentious strife,  
Or otherwise, in bed or at board,  
Offended each other in deed or word;  
Or since the parish clerk said "Amen,"  
Wish'd yourselves unmarry'd again;  
Or in a twelve month and a day  
Repented not in thought anyway;  
But continu'd true in thought and desire,  
As when you join'd hands in holy quire.

During the time the oath was being administered, the man and his wife were surrounded by all the people, not only in the village, but also in the neighbourhood, who, with the Prior and monks walked in procession round the churchyard, after which the Steward repeated to them the following words:

If to these conditions, without all fear,  
Of your own accord you will freely swear,  
A whole gammon of bacon you shall receive,  
And bear it hence with love and good leave;  
For this is our custom, at Dunmow well known,  
Tho' the pleasure be ours, the bacon's your own.

The stones on which the aspirants knelt were still shown in Mr. Brand's time. The parties were, after taking the oath, taken upon men's shoulders, and carried first about the Priory Churchyard, and, after, through the town, the Friars and brethren, and all the townsfolk, young and old, following them with shouts and acclamations, with their bacon before them. In later days the lucky couple were chaired through the village. The old chair is still to be seen at Dunmow.

Before passing on to detail the known instances of the awarding of the flitch, there is a pretty story I should like to introduce:

In the time of Henry the Third, the story says, a young man and a girl, in the plain dress of the English yeomanry, presented themselves one morning before the Prior of Dunmow, and demanded his blessing on their marriage. The good

churchman, pleased with the youth's respectful tone, and the blooming face of his bride-elect, readily consented. As the last words of the blessing were spoken, a brawny servant of the Priory came tramping past, carrying on his broad shoulders a flitch of bacon that might have suited the table of Harold Hardrada himself.

"Take yonder flitch to mend your wedding cheer, my children," said the kindly Prior, "and remember the Prior of Dunmow."

The words appeared to have a transforming power, for the seeming yeoman rose to his feet, before the Prior's startled eyes, with the bearing of a King, and throwing back his head, haughtily shook out from beneath his coarse, flat cap a profusion of long, curled locks, such as no English farmer had ever worn.

"Prior," said he, in a clear, musical voice, "in requital of thy courtesy, I hereby assign and give to thee in this manor land enough to bring thee two hundred marks a year, on condition that, whenever any bride and bridegroom shall come hither to kneel upon these stones, where we have knelt this day, and shall swear that for a year and a day they have been true lovers, even as we are now, they shall receive ever such a flitch of bacon as this which thou hast given us."

The Prior stared, as well he might, and asked, doubtfully:

"Who art thou that speakest thus, my son? If thou be jesting with me, bethink thee that it is not seemly to make sport of the Church's servants."

"I jest not, worthy Prior," answered the young man, proudly. "He to whom thou hast given thy blessing as a nameless yeoman, is Sir Reginald Fitzwalter, Lord of the Manor, and all that lies upon it. The title-deeds of my grant to thee and thine shall be in thy hands by this hour on the morrow."

As he promised, so he fulfilled. The title-deeds to the Priory and surrounding land were handed to the Prior on the morrow, and, says the ancient chronicler, originated the giving of the Dunmow Flitch.

Personally, I place little reliance on these pretty legends of the past. They are very nice reading, and served a useful purpose in the days of long since, and are only valuable now as a relic of undoubted antiquity. The custom may be the survival of one of great antiquity, for hanging up flitches of bacon was practised by the

Romana. Swine, also, were held in great veneration in the North; and there is a record that the heathen Prussians offered periodically a flitch of bacon to Percunos, their mighty god.

Now I will pass on to the instances of its gift. The first recorded application for the flitch was made on April the seventeenth, 1445, by Richard Wright, labourer, of Badeburgh, near the city of Norwich, and the bacon was, after proof, delivered to him by John Cannon, Prior of the Convent.

On Lady Day, 1467, it was claimed by Stephen Samuel, husbandman, of Ashton, in Essex, and delivered to him by Roger Rulcot, at that time Prior of the Convent.

In 1510, one Thomas le Fuller—or, more probably, Thomas the fuller—of Coggershall, in the County of Essex, came to Dunmow and claimed the bacon, which was delivered to him by John Taylor, the Prior, with all the ancient formalities. This is the last time it was claimed before the Reformation, as appears by the record published by Mr. Hearne, the original of which is now in the Herald's Office.

After the Reformation, though the custom continued, the ceremony changed; for, whereas formerly the applicants were accompanied by monks, subsequently they were only attended by the Steward, officers, and tenants of the Manor, accompanied by crowds of spectators. From the Reformation to 1701, there is a gap, and then we come to what may be termed the authentic presentations of the bacon. On the 27th of June in that year, William Parsley and his wife—the husband a butcher of Much Easton, Essex—and Mr. Reynolds, steward to Sir Charles Barrington, of Hatfield, Broad Oaks, both applied for and obtained the Dunmow Flitch. The jury, on this occasion, was composed of spinsters. The record of this ceremony is thus placed on the Roll of the Manor Court of Dunmow:

"DUNMOW At a Court Baron of the NUPER PRIORY. Right Worshipful Sir Thomas May, Knight, there holden upon Friday, the 27th day June, in the 13th year of the reign of our sovereign lord William III., by grace of God of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc., and in the year of God 1701, before Thomas Wheeler, Gentleman, Steward there.

"HOMAGE. { Elizabeth Beaumont, spinster.  
Henrietta Beaumont, spinster.  
Annabella Beaumont, spinster.  
Jane Beaumont, spinster.  
Mary Wheeler, spinster. } JURAT

"Be it remembered that at this Court it is found and presented by the homage aforesaid, that John Reynolds, of Hatfield Regis, alias Hatfield Broad Oak, in the County of Essex, Gent., and Anne, his wife, have been married for the space of ten years past, and upwards, and it is likewise found, presented, and adjudged by the homage aforesaid that the said J. Reynolds, and Anne his wife, by means of their quiet and peaceable, tender and loving cohabitation for the space of time aforesaid, as appears by reference to the said homage, are fit to receive the ancient and accustomed oath, whereby to entitle themselves to have the bacon of Dunmow delivered unto them according to the custom of the Manor.

"Whereupon at the Court, in full open Court, came the said John Reynolds and Anne his wife, in their proper persons, and humbly prayed that they might be admitted to take the oath aforesaid. Whereupon the said Steward, with the Jury, suitors, and other officers of the Court proceeded with the usual solemnity to the ancient and accustomed place for the administration of the oath, and receiving the bacon aforesaid; that is to say, to the two great stones lying near the church door, within the said Manor, when the said John Reynolds and Anne his wife, kneeling down on the aforesaid stones, the said Steward did administer unto them the above-mentioned oath. Being both lawfully sworn, the said Steward delivered to them the gammon of bacon, with the usual solemnity.

"At the same time William Parsley, of Much Easton, in the County of Essex, and Jane his wife, being married for the space of three years last past and upwards, by means of their quiet, peaceable, loving, and tender cohabitation for the said space of time, came and demanded the said bacon, and had it delivered to them according to the aforesaid order.

"THOMAS WHEELER, Steward."

On Thursday, the twentieth of June, 1751, at a Court of the Manor, the flitch was claimed by one John Shakeshanks, woolcomber, Watersfield, Essex, and Anne his wife, and it was delivered to them by the Steward. Mr. Brand says:

"I have a large print, now become ex-

ceedingly rare, entitled 'an exact perspective view of Dunmow, late the Priory, in the County of Essex, with a representation of the ceremony and procession in that Manor, on Tuesday, the twentieth of June, 1751, when Thomas Shakeshanks, in the County aforesaid, weaver, and Ann his wife, came to demand, and did actually receive a gammon of bacon, having first kneeled upon two bare stones, within the church door, and taken the oath, etc. N.B.—Before the dissolution of monasteries it does not appear, by searching the most ancient records, to have been demanded above three times, and including this, just as often since. Taken on the spot and engraved by David Osborne.' I may add to the foregoing the fact that Shakeshanks realised a considerable sum of money by selling slices of the well-won bacon among the five thousand or more spectators who assembled when he made his successful claim.

The fitch was again successfully claimed by a man and his wife in 1763, but whose names are not recorded, and, after this, appears to have ceased as a custom. Mr. Walpole says:

"The Earl of Sutherland and his lady, who both died at Bath in 1766, lived in so happy a manner that had they recovered from that fatal sickness which carried them both into eternity, they intended to have gone to Dunmow, and claimed the bacon. But when at this town a few years ago we were informed that this custom had been suppressed by Mr. Crawley, the Lord of the Manor, who being perfectly satisfied that it had been wrongfully claimed, and was always productive of idleness and riotings, was warranted to do so by the nature of the original grant."

In 1772, one John Gildar and his wife presented themselves; but were unable to press their claims, for want of opportunity, on the Lord of the Manor. According to Mr. Brand, "It is stated in a newspaper of the year 1772, that on the twelfth of June that year, John and Susan Gildar, of the parish of Tarling, in Essex, made their public entry into Dunmow, escorted by a great concourse of people, and demanded the gammon of bacon, according to the notice given previously, declaring themselves ready to take the usual oath; but, to the great disappointment of the happy couple and their numerous attendants, the Priory gates were found fast nailed, and all admission refused, in pursuance of

the express orders of the Lord of the Manor."

Gough, in his edition of "Camden's Britannia," 1809, ii, 54, mentions that the custom is now abolished, on account of the abuse of it in these loose-principled times.

In 1851, however, this custom seems to have been revived by the villagers, for a man named Harrels, and his wife, who, having applied to the Lord of the Manor, and been refused, were accorded a fitch by the villagers, who made the application the occasion of a fête.

After this, the Saffron Walden and Dunmow Agricultural Society took the matter up, and, in 1837, as appears from the "John Bull" of October the eighth, awarded the bacon to an applicant who proved his claim. "The Chelmsford Chronicle," again, of January the twenty-fifth, 1838, says: "The anniversary of the Dunmow Agricultural Society was held, when the fitch of bacon was distributed."

In 1855, Mr. Harrison Ainsworth, the novelist, revived the custom; and on the nineteenth of July of that year, Mr. and Mrs. Barlow, of Chipping Ongar, and the Chevalier de Chatelain and his English wife carried off a fitch each. This took place in the Town Hall at Dunmow.

Once again, and for the last time, the fitch was awarded in 1860; probably with this we have heard the last of the ceremony, except in antiquarian works, as a relic of the past.

An imitation of the custom took place at Harrogate, on the twenty-fifth of June, 1764. On this day, according to the "Annals of Yorkshire" (1860), "an excellent dinner was given at 'The Green Dragon,' Harrogate, by twenty-one of the neighbouring gentry, to Mr. and Mrs. Liddal, on their taking the 'Fitch of Bacon Oath,' inserted in the six hundred and seventh number of the 'Spectator,' and appointed to be taken by such happy couples as wish to be rewarded for having lived one year and a day, or more, in wedlock, without strife or wishing the 'silken cord' untied."

For one hundred years the Abbots of St. Melaine, in Bretagne, bestowed a similar prize for connubial contentment; and at the Abbey of Weir hung a fitch of bacon with the following lines:

Is there to be found a married man  
That in veritie declare can  
That his marriage him doth not rue,  
That he has no fear of his wife for a shrew,  
He may this bacon for himself down hew.

Almost equally historic with the Dun-

mow Flitch—though the records of it have not been kept—was the Whichenovre Flitch. Sir Philip de Somerville held the Manor of Whichenovre, or, as it is given in all old documents, "Whichenour," from the Earls of Lancaster; half the fees to be remitted, as well as half the fines, on condition that he kept a flitch of bacon in his hall at all times—Lent alone excepted—ready for delivery to every man or woman married, after a year and a day of the marriage be passed; and to be given to every man of religion: Archbishop, Prior, or other religious; and to every Priest after the year and day of their probation finished, or of their dignity received. There is not the least doubt, I believe, that either this was copied from Dunmow, or that Dunmow was copied from this; but, which is the oldest home of the custom it is impossible to say.

From an old number of the "Spectator," Dr. Plott's "History of Staffordshire," and other sources, it appears that Sir Philip Somerville held the Manors of Whichenovre, Seirescot, Ridware, Netherton, and Cowlee, all in the County of Stafford, of the Earls of Lancaster, by this memorable service. "The said Philip shall find, maintain, and sustain one bacon flitch hanging in his hall at Whichenovre, ready arrayed at all times of the year but in Lent, to be given to every man or woman married, after the day and the year of their marriage be past in form following:

"Whensoever that any one such before married will come to enquire for the bacon, in their own person, they shall come to the Bailiff or the Porter of the Lordship of Whichenovre, and shall say to them in manner as ensueth: 'Bailiff (or Porter) I do you to know that I am come for myself to demand one Bacon Flyke hanging in the hall of the Lord of the Manor of Whichenour, after the form thereunto belonging.'

"After which relation the Bailiff or Porter shall assign a day to him, upon promise by his faith to return, and with him to bring twain of his neighbours. And in the meantime the said Bailiff shall take with him twain of the freeholders of the Lordship of Whichenovre, and they shall go to the Manor of Rudlow, belonging to Robert Knightleys, or his Bailiff, commanding him to be ready at Whichenovre, the day appointed, at prime of day, with his carriage, that is to say a horse and a saddle, a sacke and a picke, for to convey the said bacon and corn a journey out of

the County of Stafford at his cestage. And then the said Bailiff shall, with the said freeholders, summon all the tenants of the said Manor to be ready at the day appointed at Whichenovre, for to do and perform the services which they owe to the bacon. And at the day assigned all such as owe service to the bacon shall be ready at the gate of the Manor of Whichenovre from the sun rising to noon, attending and awaiting for the coming of the one who fetcheth the bacon. And when he is come there shall be delivered to him and his fellow chaplets, and to all those who shall be there to do their services due to the Baron. And they shall lead the said demandant, with trumps and tabours, and other manner of minstrelsy, to the hall door, where he shall find the Lord of Whichenovre, or his Steward, ready to deliver the bacon in this manner: He shall enquire of him which demandeth the bacon if he have brought twain of his neighbours with him; which must answer, 'They be here ready.' And then the Steward shall cause these two neighbours to swear if the said demandant be a wedded man, or have been a wedded man; and if since his marriage one year and a day be past; and if he be a free man or a villein. And if his said neighbours make oath that he hath for him all these points rehearsed, then shall the bacon be taken down and brought to the hall door, and shall there be laid upon the quarter of wheat, and upon one other of rye. And he that demandeth the bacon shall kneel upon his knee, and shall hold his right hand upon a book, which book shall be laid upon the bacon and the corn, and shall make oath in this manner:

"Here ye, Sir Philip de Somerville, Lord of Whichenovre, Mayntayner and gyver of this baconne, that I, A—, sith I wedded B—, my wife, and sythe I hadd hyer in my keepyng, and at my wylle, by a year and a day after our marriage, I wold not have chaunged her for none other; farer ne fouler; richer ne pourer; ne for none other descended of greater lynage; sleepyng ne wakyng, at noo time. And if the seyd B. were sole and I sole I wold take heyr to be my wyfe before all the wymmen of the world, and what condicones soever they be good or evylle, as help me God and his Seyntes, and this flesh and all fleshes."

After this, the neighbours took an oath that the applicant had sworn that only which was true. If it were shown by the

man and his neighbours that he was a freeman, the Steward delivered to him half a quarter of wheat and a cheese; and if he were a villein, that is to say, an ordinary labourer on the soil, he was to have only half a quarter of rye, without the cheese, which went to the more fortunate farmer or freeman. This done, "then shall Knyghtleye, the Lord of Rudlow, be called for to carry all these things before rehearsed, and the said corn shall be laid on one horse, and the bacon above it; and he to whom the bacon appertaineth shall ascend upon his horse, and shall take the cheese before him if he have a horse: and if he have none the Lord of Whichenovre shall cause him to have one horse and saddle, to such time as he be passed his lordship; and so shall they depart the Manor of Whichenovre with the corn and the bacon before him that hath it, with trumpets, tabourets, and other manner of minstrelsy. And all the free tenants of Whichenovre shall conduct him to be passed the Lordship of Whichenovre. And then shall return, except him to whom appertaineth to make the carriage and journey without the County of Stafford, at the costs of their Lord of Whichenovre."

Both at Dunmow and at Whichenovre it was customary, after according the flich, to spend the remainder of the day in merriment. Indeed it was, to all intents and purposes, turned into a gala-day, with sports of all kinds, music, feasting, and dancing. The awarding of the Dunmow Flich appears to have been conditional, as to its continuation, having a forfeiture clause. Under this clause, the Lord of the Manor, rightly or wrongly, refused to continue the custom. Not so the Lord of Whichenovre, he had no choice but to award the flich and "trimmings" if they were demanded. If he neglected to comply with the request, properly made and supported, of the person who claimed the bacon, the wheat, and the cheese, he was liable to be proceeded against by law, and fined one hundred shillings—a considerable sum in those days.

Such, then, is the history of the custom which has given the title to this article. It is dead, perhaps happily so; for, to-day, it would be almost an impossibility to have such a celebration without the rough element being introduced, and putting to flight all possibility of rural merriment. Mr. Harrison Ainsworth discovered this when he attempted to resuscitate the

custom. The few occasions on which the fitches were claimed and granted seem to point to the conclusion that marriage was as much a success with our forefathers as it is with us, and that the couple who lived together in complete harmony for three hundred and sixty-six days was as great a rarity.

### A LONDON POLICE-COURT.

To make the acquaintance of a police-court is, at some time or other, the common lot of most of those who bear the burden of life within the limits of the great metropolis. It is not necessary to belong to the criminal classes, whose knowledge of the subject—like Mr. Sam Weller's of London in general—is extensive and peculiar; nor either to be a victim of the predatory race, although, in that case, the experience is likely to be remembered. For there are many other ways in which the jurisdiction of the police-court may be brought home to you.

Have you left home on some wintry morning without providing for the clearance of snow from the strip of pavement in front of your dwelling? Has your chimney caught fire, and have the services of the fire brigade been zealously administered to put it out? Has your little dog run out unmuzzled into the street, and been run in by the active officer on the beat? Have you, in fine, offended in any way, knowingly or unknowingly, against the written or unwritten law, whether civil, municipal, or criminal, you have a fair chance of enjoying an evil quarter of an hour about the precincts of a London police-court.

The police-court is not usually to be sought in busy thoroughfares and well-frequented streets. It is, in most cases, rather difficult to find, and boasts of little outward embellishment. In a quiet, dowdy street, the plain, inconspicuous building may be passed without any particular notice. Sometimes, indeed, the quietude may be broken by the loud, passionate cries of some female, furious at being temporarily deprived of her mate:

"What, my Bill to 'ave three months' hard for mugging that wretched scoundrel Joe! Oh, let me get at him!"

And Joe stands a chance of putting in a bad time, if he should encounter wild-eyed Bess in her present mood. But these clamours soon die away in the distance, as discreet friends hurry the girl away from

the dangerous neighbourhood, where her riotous demeanour might involve her in the same fate as the beloved one. And the street resumes its accustomed quiet, people slipping in and out of the portals of the police-court in a quiet, undemonstrative way.

Yet, if some case is going on which excites public interest—such as a prize-fighting prosecution, or the sequel of a gambling club raid—then there will be a rush and a crowd that will startle the neighbourhood from its propriety, and task all the energies of the burly constables on duty to prevent the whole court being carried by a rush.

But, arriving at the police-court about ten a.m., the hour at which business usually commences, there will be found, perhaps, a number of people, chiefly women, clustered about in the lobby, and pressing upon the policeman in charge of the inner door; people of chirpy and chaffy demeanour, and respectable, if homely attire, who seem quite free from the nervous misery which attends an unaccustomed visit to a court of justice, whether as plaintiff or defendant. And these jocular people may prove to be a number of careless matrons and maidens who have lost or mislaid certain valuable securities known as pawn-tickets—a mischance which renders necessary a statutory declaration before a magistrate. And when these are disposed of, a knot of people still remain who are passed into the court one by one, by the attendants. These are applicants for summonses; neighbours, perhaps, who have ceased to be neighbourly, and have come to open warfare; servants who have complaints against former employers; people who have been beaten, and are not content. With these there may be a few who have come for "advice," it may be upon a matrimonial dispute, or on some knotty question of lodging-house ethics; while there are, perhaps, one or two females of eccentric costume and deportment who seize every occasion of having a word or two with the magistrate in reference to some treasured grievance.

When all these applicants have been admitted, and ranged in order, a little time will elapse during which they will have an opportunity of studying the interior aspect of a police-court: the bench, with perhaps a few ornamental festoons of drapery overhead; but everything else plain and of strictly utilitarian arrange-

ment. The chief clerk is below, arranging his papers and dockets; the solicitors' pew is occupied by a single representative of the profession; while the box reserved for the fourth estate contains a solitary reporter, who seems to be thinking of anything but reporting on his own account, as he sits absorbed in the morning news-sheet.

Indeed, of all that passes in a police-court, a very small portion finds its way to the public press. Only if your case should chance to present anything unusual, grotesque, sentimental, or amusing, it will be picked up as so much treasure-trove by the vigilant reporter, and, multiplied by the ingenious flimsy, will form a paragraph perhaps in every morning paper, and thus disseminate your name and fame to the four quarters of the globe. With all this there is a gentle buzz of conversation; the public exchange confidences as to the merits of their cases; police officers murmur discreetly to officials; when, suddenly, there is a little stir in the court, the usher calls out "silence!" and the magistrate makes his appearance from his private room, and takes his seat with business-like alacrity on the bench of justice.

The police have the first turn, as might be expected; but the list of summonses they require for various infractions of the law is soon gone through, and then the general public has its turn. Each applicant steps up to the witness-box, states his or her case; the magistrate puts a question or two, and then grants a summons or refuses it. If the summons is granted, the applicant passes into an adjoining office, pays two shillings, and, having ascertained on what day the case will come on, has nothing more to do in the matter till then, as the police undertake the duty of serving these summonses. Then follow the applications for advice, and sometimes for relief—for each police-court has a poor-box, which is replenished from time to time by gifts from the charitably-disposed, who have a well-founded confidence that their contributions will be distributed only to deserving and pressing cases.

When all this light and preliminary business is disposed of, the real, grim, serious work of the police-court begins. The charge-sheet, a document of portentous size, and often containing a formidable catalogue of offenders, is handed in by the police, and the hearing of the night-charges begins.

And the prisoners—whence come they? Probably from many different quarters, and by various means of transit. Some may have walked, under the charge of police, from a neighbouring police-station; or a cab may have brought some prisoner of higher pretensions than the ordinary. But the most have arrived some time before the opening of the court, driven up in the spacious, but not individually roomy, police-van. There has been a general gaol delivery of all the police-cells throughout the metropolis—such a delivery as occurs every workaday morning, when omnibuses, trains, and trams are crammed with smart, well-dressed, and cheerful-looking young men, and, in these latter days, with a considerable sprinkling of young women, who may answer to the same description, hurrying, with hearts more or less light, to their daily employment. There are not many light hearts in the police-van, probably, although a reckless joviality is often assumed by its more seasoned passengers, and songs and choruses, with a dismal kind of gaiety about them, often enliven the long and dreary passage.

A certain number of police-courts, indeed, are in direct communication with adjacent police-stations—six of them, to be exact, out of a total of sixteen—and in these cases, the prisoners are brought direct from the police-cells to the dock of the court. But when the first batch of prisoners has been delivered, there is still work for "Black Maria"—the half-affectionate sobriquet of the police-omnibus, although she is not exactly black, but as dark a green as can be painted—for the "remands" have to be brought up from the various prisons, from Holloway, Pentonville, or Millbank. And there is a good deal of "remanding" under the police system of prosecution; and an unfortunate prisoner—presumably innocent—may be jolted about for some hours, as his conveyance deposits passengers at one police-court or another, before he arrives at his destination, and may spend a long day in the police-court cells, only to appear for a moment before a magistrate, while some piece of formal evidence is given to justify a "remand." To the seasoned offender this is a rather agreeable diversion of the monotony of prison life, he enjoys the ribald songs of the police-van, the coarse jokes and highly-seasoned language of the police-court cells with the companionship of birds of a congenial feather. But to the prisoner

who is as yet not inoculated with the criminal taint, the experience is sad and depressing enough.

It is now eleven a.m., and the business of the police-court is in full swing. The night charges are on, and on a Monday morning these charges are rather heavy. Saturday night, with wages paid, and drink in plenty to excite the quarrelsome, brings a good many to spend the Sunday in the weary confinement of the police-cells. And the lobby of the police-court is well packed with a miscellaneous crowd—witnesses, friends of prisoners who have come to see how they get out of their scrapes, people who are waiting to surrender to their bail. Here are shabbily-dressed women with babies, wearied and depressed; a coster's bride, in smart hat and ostrich feather, and brilliant shawl; a knot of sturdy but predacious-looking fellows whispering among themselves, well and warmly clad in corduroys and velveteens; poor starving creatures in rags and tatters, and wild-looking females in silks and satins, all frayed and faded.

It is a dreary, drizzling day, well suited to the occasion; the stone-paved passage is damp, and smeared with mud from the trampling, weary feet which have passed to and fro, and the long, wooden bench by the wall is filled from end to end. Half-way up the passage is the entrance to the court, enclosed within a wooden screen, and jealously guarded by a burly constable. The court is nominally a public one, but practical considerations prescribe the rule, "No admittance except on business." At the extreme end of the passage another door opens into the interior regions of the court; and here are gathered a number of women and youths who watch anxiously for the opening of the door, and hold hurried conferences with the warder. These, we are told, are mostly the friends of prisoners on remand, who hope for the opportunity of communicating with them; and some are provided with baskets or basins or pocket-handkerchiefs containing provisions, for an untried prisoner is permitted to have his meals from the outside world if he has money to pay for them, or friends willing to provide them. If he has neither, and is detained in the police-cells till the afternoon, he is entitled to a meal, cost not exceeding fourpence, at the public expense. But the choky feeling of one awaiting examination is generally meal enough for him, and the allowance is seldom claimed.

Next to the prisoner's door is the warrant-room, where uniformed policemen transact the business relating to the issue and execution of those peremptory documents. And beyond this there is nothing to be seen of the economy of the police-court by the weary expectants in the lobby. Women huddle together on the benches and try to keep their babies warm in the folds of old worn shawls; men hunch up their shoulders and stick their hands in their pockets. Now and then a name is called by the usher, and repeated in stentorian tones by the stalwart policeman. The people called are generally those who do not happen to be there. The friend of overnight, who valiantly promised to bear witness on behalf of the prisoner, is generally found wanting in the cold atmosphere of the morning's reflection.

But now the doorkeeper thinks he can find room for one or two more, and the interior of the court is revealed, with the magistrate on the bench, a prisoner in the dock, a witness in the box, and the proceedings going on with a slow deliberation that shows something serious to be in progress. The summary cases are disposed of quickly enough; but this is an Old Bailey business, and the clerk of the court is getting the evidence into the depositions, that bulky bundle of papers which will accompany the prisoner before the Grand Jury, which will be spread before the Judge as he sits on the awful judgement-bench, and finally endorsed with the finding of the Jury, will be buried for all time in the legal archives of the country. The case, indeed, is serious enough. There has been a fight with knives in the slums, and one of the combatants has been desperately wounded, and is now dying in the hospital. His antagonist is here in the dock, a dark, powerful young fellow, stolid enough, and seemingly almost unmoved, as he listens to the slowly-enunciated evidence that is accumulating against him. "Have you any question to ask this witness?" says the magistrate, as a policeman finishes his story. "We begun with fists and we finished with knives, that's all I got to say," he murmurs, doggedly; and, in effect, it is all that he has on his mind. And when he is remanded he turns away with a look of relief on his face, and returns with alacrity to his cell.

The next case is one of picking a pocket. The prisoner, a strong, burly young fellow, not at all of the Artful Dodger class, nor

belonging to the sleek, slippery class of thieves who wind in and about a crowd like so many eels. Our prisoner evidently belongs to the heavy-handed, rather than the light-fingered gentry; and such is the prosecutor's experience, a respectable, amiable-looking country manufacturer, who complains of having been unceremoniously hustled as well as robbed. That the hustling profession is a profitable one is shown by the result of the search by the police of the prisoner's pockets, which contained, besides five pounds in gold—which happens, curiously enough, to be the exact sum the prosecutor lost—nearly two pounds' worth of silver and copper.

While this is going on there is a little stir of interest and expectation among a little knot of young men, who are leaning over the barrier of what is called the public part of the court. They are of the same build and general appearance as the prisoner, and probably belong, not exactly to the criminal class, but to that border region which unhappily seems to be growing more extensive in these latter days, whose denizens turn their hands indifferently to honest labour or to deeds of violence, with a general preference for the latter. The cause of this interest is presently manifest when a prison official comes forward to prove a previous conviction against the honest youth in the dock. Upon this the solicitor, who has been defending the prisoner, holds a hurried conference with his client, and announces that, by his advice, the prisoner will plead guilty, in order that the matter may be settled by the magistrate. "Six months' hard labour," is the result of this advice, which was probably wise enough. For although there might have been a slender chance of acquittal before a Jury, who are not allowed to know anything about "previous convictions," yet the sentence, if found guilty, would have been much heavier for previous convictions—and half-a-dozen more might have turned up at the Sessions—which count for a good deal in the allotment of punishment.

"And what about the money?" asks the now-convicted prisoner. "Is he to have it all?" indicating the prosecutor, whom he evidently considers to be a very unworthy character. The magistrate orders the gold taken from the prosecutor to be restored to him. The rest, the silver and bronze, is the property of the thief, who leaves the court with a hop, skip, and jump, seemingly consoled by the prospect

of starting in business with a little capital at the end of his period of retirement. And yet, perhaps, we do the thief injustice, who may have tender feelings, like anybody else. Possibly one of those patient women with a baby, who waits in the lobby, may be the prisoner's wife, and the money may be meant for her, to keep body and soul together till she can find employment.

A string of cases follow of no particular interest, and some are dismissed rejoicing, and others go, bewailing fine or imprisonment, back to the cells. Again appears a wild, reckless, passionate girl in tawdry, ragged garments, who bursts into loud lamentations as she stands before the magistrate. She has been "put back" for some petty theft, being young, and hitherto unconvicted, to see if some benevolent lady will take charge of her in a Home. The Home is ready if the girl is willing. But no! she loudly and passionately declares that she will not go to any Home. And then the girl's mother is sent for, who is waiting outside—an eminently respectable woman in appearance, who might be housekeeper in a nobleman's family—and mother and daughter exchange looks with the width of the court between them—the decorous-looking woman in black silk, and the wild, unkempt, and dragged creature in the dock. The mother is for the Home, too—one wonders what sort of a home she made for this wild, erring daughter of hers. But the girl is firm enough, amidst her tears, with a decided negative.

"Then there is nothing for it but a prison," says the magistrate, severely.

And at the prospect, the girl's resolution breaks down.

"Oh, I will be good!" she weeps forth like a froward child.

And so the incident terminates to everybody's satisfaction. And we will hope that the young woman will come under firm and capable hands.

After this, "remands" come in thick and fast; prisoners appear and disappear. People who have been "put back" are, perhaps, finally discharged with a caution; others get small fines, which they pay, and they, too, go their way rejoicing. At last the charge sheet is disposed of; it flutters from the hands of the magistrate to those of the chief clerk. And that is a sign that the morning's business is finished, and there is a general clearance of the court as the magistrate disappears into his

private room. It is only a break in the day's proceedings. The court will sit again at two, and continue till the business then in hand is disposed of: and that will be business of a more private character. To-day may be devoted to the School Board; and parents and children, school visitors and managers will be in the respective positions of defendants and plaintiffs. Another afternoon will be given to private summonses, the squabbles, grievances, and offences which the police have not taken up. Cabmen and omnibus conductors may have a sitting to themselves. And, after the luncheon hour, the lobby will be filled by a more orderly and respectable crowd than that which usually awaits the disposal of the night charges.

But the luncheon hour may afford us a good opportunity for examining the interior economy of a police-court, which, in this case, happens to be one of modern construction, and among the most convenient of its kind. To the right of the public court is the private room of the magistrate, and the office where the clerical business of the court is conducted. The other side reveals another phase of the police-court: it is a gaol as well as a court, a gaol in which no prisoners spend the night, but which has its gaoler, who is responsible for the safety of the prisoners while under his care. A long passage is lined with a row of cells, which are mostly occupied at the present time, each cell holding four or five prisoners. It is not a gloomy place by any means, and the prisoners, a presumably innocent crew—although, perhaps, they do not look it—are not altogether silent or brooding, but seem to cultivate a jocose and cheerful spirit. And such cells as are empty are clean and sweet, with sufficient light and ventilation. The walls are done in white glazed bricks, and the cells warmed with hot-water pipes. And there is plenty of work going on in the way of enlarging and beautifying the present accommodation for prisoners. Opposite the cells is the waiting-room, so called, a room divided into compartments like the old-fashioned chop-house. For the ordinary prisoners from the police-courts, are not placed in cells, or put in charge of the gaoler. Each takes his seat in one of the reserved compartments, and the constable whose captive he may be takes up his position in the central passage. Then, as the cases are taken, the prisoners are ranged along the passage with their attendant policemen, who see

their charges safely into the dock, and then are quit of them altogether, except in so far as they may have to appear as witnesses in the case. From the dock, the choice is, liberty or the police-court cell. Even those who have the option of paying a fine must go to the cells till the fine is paid, unless they can discharge it on the spot.

On the floor above there is a similar arrangement of cells, passages, and waiting-room, for the use of female prisoners; and here, too, everything is being renovated and improved—the result of a Commission appointed several years ago to enquire into the accommodation provided for untried prisoners at police-courts. Coming downstairs again, the passage from the cells leads into a roomy courtyard, surrounded by high walls, all the windows looking out on which are strongly barred, while a formidable pair of gates, closed by heavy bars, will presently give admittance to the police-van, and will then be carefully closed till the van has taken up its load. In a general way, the van will arrive at about half-past two, and carry off the bulk of the prisoners detained in the cells. But for any who may be expecting release on bail, or on the payment of fine, or who may be subsequently committed, "Black Maria" calls again as late as seven o'clock, after which nothing further goes; and those who cannot find bail in money must be driven off to prison. And with the clanging of the gate behind the last batch of prisoners, the police-court is free, till next morning, of the labours and responsibilities of its position.

#### ASTLEY'S AND THE "CIRQUE."

WHEN I first visited the equestrian establishment on the "Surrey side," its principal attraction was, unquestionably, Andrew Ducrow, whose extraordinary feats of horsemanship far surpassed whatever marvels of the kind the frequenters of that popular theatre had previously witnessed. His father—Peter Ducrow, a native of Bruges and an acrobat of some celebrity—appeared in London as the Flemish Hercules, in 1793, in which year Andrew was born. The latter commenced his career as a pantomimist, and after a promising début at Astley's, accompanied the other members of his family to Holland, and from thence to Paris, where, having adopted the equestrian line of busi-

ness, he was engaged at Franconi's Cirque. In 1824, he and his stud of horses greatly contributed to the success of "Cortez," a spectacular drama produced at Covent Garden by the manager Bunn; and a few months later we find him at Astley's, where he speedily became a favourite, and in the double act of "Cupid and Zephyr," performed by himself and his wife, and above all, by his great feat in riding six horses at the same time, as the "Courier of St. Petersburg," drew overflowing audiences.

In 1831, Ducrow and West, then joint lessees of Astley's, produced "Mazeppa," an emotional spectacle which has often since been revived, and invariably with success; the additional attraction, moreover, of the admirably-trained "Pegasus" flying over the backs of three horses, and performing other equally remarkable feats, proved a constant source of delight to the public, and materially influenced the receipts of the theatre.

I well remember Ducrow as the Indian Hunter, and as the personator of Grecian statues after antique models, an exhibition displaying his shapely figure and graceful attitudes to the greatest advantage; as an equestrian, his coolness equalled his daring, and a curious instance of sang-froid shown by him in a very different line of business is related by Mr. Frost, in his "Circus Life and Circus Celebrities," to which comprehensive and amusing work I am indebted for several of the above particulars.

"One morning, during the season of 1833, he was on the stage, in his dressing-gown and slippers, to witness the first rehearsal of a new feat by the German rope-walker, Cline. The rope was stretched from the stage to the gallery, and the performer was to ascend it and return. Cline was a little nervous; perhaps the rope had been arranged more in accordance with Ducrow's ideas than with his own. Whatever the cause, he hesitated to ascend the rope, when Ducrow snatched the balancing-pole from his hand, and walked up the rope in his slippers, his dressing-gown flapping about his legs in the draught from the stage in a manner that caused his ascent to be watched with no small amount of anxiety, though he did not appear to feel the slightest trepidation himself."

Ducrow's first wife, who had been associated with him in his early triumphs, died in 1836. He subsequently married

that most graceful equestrian and tight-rope performer, Miss Woolford. He died in January, 1842.

Whenever the receipts at Astley's showed any sign of falling off, the manager had no difficulty in restoring the equilibrium by the revival either of "The Battle of Waterloo," or of "Mazeppa." Both were safe "draws"; the latter especially so. People were never tired of admiring the "wild, untamed steed" careering across the stage, and bearing its living burden over the steppes of the Ukraine. The last representative of the hero I remember seeing was Adah Isaacs Menken, in 1868. She was a native of New Orleans, and, besides possessing considerable attractions, had attained a certain celebrity in America, and afterwards in Paris, both as dancer and actress; and, being an excellent linguist, had even, it is said, translated the *Iliad* in her thirteenth year. Notwithstanding an enormous amount of puffing, however, her appearance as Mazeppa by no means increased her artistic reputation; and, although she drew large houses, the exhibition, "a combination of 'poses plastiques,' and dramatic spectacle," was more repulsive than agreeable. She subsequently published a small volume of poems, bearing the title of "Infelicia," and adorned with a prettily-engraved portrait of herself. This little book has become a bibliographical rarity, probably on account of the authorship of some of the verses having been ascribed—whether rightly or wrongly I am unable to say—to an eminent poet of the day.

Some years before the French Revolution, Philip Astley opened a circus in the Faubourg du Temple, where varied entertainments were given, consisting of equestrian exercises and feats of strength and agility. On his departure from Paris to London, the establishment fell into the hands of Laurent Franconi, who transferred it to a new building on the site of the present Rue de la Paix. He then resigned the management to his two sons, by whom the manage was transported to a theatre erected under their superintendence in the Rue Monthabor, where pantomimes were performed, in which horses were invariably introduced, and often played the principal parts. In 1809 the brothers Franconi quitted the Rue Monthabor, to take possession of their old theatre in the Faubourg du Temple, where the pantomimic talent of Madame Minette Franconi and the equestrian skill of other members of the

family, proved extremely attractive, and ensured the success of the speculation.

In 1826, the Cirque Olympique, as it was then called, was entirely destroyed by fire; and a site having been chosen for the erection of a new theatre on the Boulevard du Temple, it was opened in the ensuing year. From that period the novelties produced were chiefly military spectacles, most of them referring to the career of Napoleon, such as "L'Empire" and "Murat," the latter of which, as particularly appealing to popular sympathy, was frequently revived.

One of the successors to the brothers Franconi in the management of this theatre, either from a constant deficiency in the receipts, or by his own extravagance, was invariably hard up for ready cash, and, as far as he could, turned a deaf ear to any fresh claim on his purse. One day, a "figurant" in his company, of the name of Berlingot, came to him, and on the plea of long and faithful service, solicited an increase of salary. The manager, who perfectly knew the sort of man he had to deal with, replied in the gravest tone he could muster: "Monsieur Berlingot, looking at the current receipts, I find it impossible to augment your salary, but I will do more for you, much more. Though it is out of my power to accede to your request, I will at least satisfy your ambition. Hitherto, you have ranked among the subordinate members of my company, and have consequently been excluded from the 'foyer' (green-room). From this day, you are an actor, and have free admittance everywhere. Go, and without fear, call Monsieur Edmond Galland comrade; speak familiarly to Madame Gautier; I authorise you to do so. I hope, Monsieur Berlingot, that you will appreciate the special favour conferred on you." Away went Berlingot, marvellously flattered by his dignified position, and at least a head taller in his own estimation than before. He soon found, however, that in one important point he was worse off than ever; for, whereas the "figurants" received their salaries on the first of every month, the actors were not paid until the seventh, so that he was forced to live on credit for a week.

It is, however, more with the Cirque of the Champs Élysées that we have to do. This very favourite place of entertainment, where performances are given from May to October, was first opened to the public in the summer of 1838, under the management

of M. Dejean, and has ever since enjoyed an uninterrupted and well-merited popularity. From the reign of Louis Philippe to the present day, every equestrian and acrobatic celebrity has, in turn, appeared there.

When I first visited it in 1844, the representatives of "la haute école" were Baucher and that fearless Amazon Caroline Loyo. The former, one of the best French riders of his time, and author of a much-esteemed work on equitation, displayed alternately the cleverness and perfect docility of his highly-trained "Partizan" and "Topaze"; while his fascinating colleague—a remarkably handsome brunette—was applauded to the echo for her skilful management of the fiery "Rutler." During one London season she was engaged at Vauxhall, where she obtained a success equal to her deserts.

Other ladies of the company, each excellent in her peculiar line, were the lightly-bounding Palmyre Annato, the dashing Madame Lejars, and the very graceful Camille Leroux. These were admirably seconded by the intrepid riders Cinizelli, young Ducrow, and Théodore Loyal. Adolphe Franconi, who had grown too stout and unwieldy for active work, was ring-master of the Cirque for many years. This last member of an illustrious family, eight of whom had successively figured in the arena, died in 1855.

As time went on, the old favourites gradually disappeared, and were replaced by a new generation of equestrian and acrobatic notabilities, little if at all inferior to their predecessors: Léotard on the flying trapeze, Bridges and his pretty wife, Adams in the "Life of a Soldier," and his charming "aposina," alike unrivalled on the tight-rope and in the saddle, formed an ensemble that no other establishment of the kind could bring together. There may be some few playgoers still living who remember the inimitable man-monkey Mazurier; but even they could hardly fail to appreciate the performance of his successor, Montero, in the touching scene of "Jocko"; nothing within my recollection has ever surpassed it. Two English clowns, Kemp and Boswell, were comical enough in their way; but, with the remembrance of Auriol still fresh in my memory, I am afraid that I scarcely relished their drolleries as much as those among the spectators, less difficult to please, evidently did.

"What is lighter than a feather? Dust.

Than dust? The wind. Than the wind? Auriol."

Such is the eulogium prefixed to a biographical notice of one of the most popular favourites the Cirque has ever possessed; and, making due allowance for the pardonable enthusiasm of the writer, I feel more than half disposed to agree with him. Auriol was indeed a marvel of lightness, elasticity, and grace, and thoroughly original in all he did. He could walk on the tops of an array of wine-bottles without in the slightest degree displacing or even shaking one of them; and could vault over twelve horses flanked by soldiers with upraised bayonets, each of whom discharged his gun during the leap. His most extraordinary feat, however, which for neatness and precision could not possibly be excelled, was called in the bills "Les Pantoufles." Taking off his slippers, he placed them on the ground a little apart from each other. Then, after turning a somersault in the air, he alighted exactly above the slippers, into which his feet found their way, as it were, mechanically, and apparently without a hair's breadth deviation.

His daughter, a dancer of more vigour than grace, married the pantomimist Flexmore, who appeared at the Paris Vaudeville as the "Dancing Scotchman," some forty years ago. Auriol himself, after a long and triumphant career at the Cirque, died in 1852.

## KESTELL OF GREYSTONE.

A SERIAL STORY.

By ESMÉ STUART.

Author of "*Muriel's Marriage*," "*Joan Vellacot*," "*A Faïre Damsell*," etc., etc.

### CHAPTER XLI. ANOTHER SON-IN-LAW.

WHEN the carriage had gone about a mile towards Greystone, Mr. Kestell pulled the string and said he would get down.

"Hunter, just drive on and leave this note at the office. I think I shall walk home. I am not very well."

"Shall I drive you back first, sir?"

"Oh, no. A little air will do me good. The air is fresh after the storm."

"Yes, sir, it was a very sudden storm. They prophesied it in the papers for to-day; but, like everything as comes from 'Merica, it's more showy than good. 'Merica's the curse of the age, sir, with its cheap machinery and its water-weed, not to mention its storms, sir."

Mr. Kestell smiled and nodded his head. The footman shut the door, got up on the box, and the carriage drove off.

Mr. Kestell walked slowly back along the road; then, as if afraid that he might meet some one—though not many persons were to be met hereabouts—he turned off into a path which led to higher lands, and from whence, making a circuit, he could descend into the road by the Pools.

It was a day that looked like autumn, perhaps because of the rain which had fallen in the night. There was a slight haze over everything, softening the shadow and sunshine of spring. By-and-by, when this was dispersed, it would be hot.

The bare trees were beautiful in their delicate outline, and did not look sad or dreary among the firs. Winter never really looked sad at Rushbrook, because of its ever-green woods and its rich carpet of heather. The robins were chirping with undisguised cheerfulness; there was a thrush seeking for building material by the last Pool when Mr. Kestell stepped on to the road.

Spring, that so often stirs the young blood to build beautiful castles in the air, and which, to the old, brings a dreamy, happy foretaste of the heavenly rest and beauty, only made this man inexpressibly sad as he paused by the tangled hedge where the dog-mercury shot upwards from the moist bank, and the speedwell peeped out with its blue eye like the first herald of summer flowers. Heaven defend the old from sorrowful back-looking; such are the avenues of remorse, though repentance stands by the way-side.

Mr. Kestell walked over the grassy path which separated the two highest Pools which were farthest away from Rushbrook. There had been an old lock here, in times gone by, by which these two Pools could be drained one into the other. Now the communication was cut off, but the old wood-work remained.

Mr. Kestell leant against it, and gazed down in the water. It was very deep, so deep that here and there the surface looked inky black. How calm and peaceful it was; it seemed to comfort and quiet the still shaken nerves, set vibrating by the morning's passionate feelings; for anger, like a pendulum, returns from whence it started; he who gives it its impetus will himself feel the rebound.

If Amice had suffered, Mr. Kestell had endured agony.

Now he was, as was often the case, arguing with himself.

"What a fool I was to be so easily roused—fool, fool! Did I not resolve only the other day that nothing should again take me off my guard. Strange that philosophy cannot be more easily learnt. 'Les malheurs des malheurs sont ceux qui n'arrivent jamais,' some Frenchman said, and he embodied in these words a tremendous truth. I have gone through a critical period, but it is over now. Nothing really remains that can bring up the past with certainty. Vicary will have enough to do with finding his own subsistence. I can't pity him; he was blind to his own interests.

"Why does he mistake his own good fortune? What will he gain by struggling with an imaginary wrong? He cannot know, and he imagines wild theories. Why waste his life, his youth? Poor fool! he will think differently when he comes to be old. Old, yes, I am getting old. Ah, how seldom one likes to acknowledge that old age has come. Manu says, 'Let not a man desire life; let him not desire death.' Does any man really desire death?"

Mr. Kestell moved slightly, and looked farther down into the black water.

"Does he? What will death do for man? Will it bury his secrets for ever, or will he be beyond the reach of discovery? Ah, who knows whether death will bring oblivion? Shall we see our private thoughts, our secrets handled ruthlessly by the living, and yet not be able to interpose one word, not give one explanation to soften down their estimate of us. Poor people, many of the living are stupid, they cannot clearly trace the minute steps which bring about such unfortunate results. And yet, perhaps, more often than not, indeed, the original mistake has been so slight, so pardonable, as to be a mere nothing compared with the result. But why trouble oneself about the future, the present only is sure—the present; there is yet time; and time is everything. Sound sleep is like death. The brain is stilled then, stilled. Dr. Pierquin saw the vermicular motion during a dreamy period, and said that, in sound sleep, the brain is quiescent. Death must, therefore, be devoid of thought. It is with matter in motion that we think. Stillness is without ideas. How strangely calm the water is to-day. All thought at rest upon it, one might say; not a ripple, not a movement—Ah, what was that?"

The strange stillness was broken by a step through the brushwood behind him. Mr. Kestell did not stir, he did not even look round, till a voice called out :

"Mr. Kestell ! It isn't often one can find the man one wants. This is luck."

It was Walter Akister.

There was a look of supreme content over his usually dark and morose features.

Mr. Kestell let go his hold of the wooden beam, and held out his hand to the young man.

"You must wonder at my unusual presence here. I cannot remember when I gave myself the pleasure of a morning stroll."

Walter cared nothing about Mr. Kestell's walks, he was too full of his own concerns.

"I am very glad, anyhow, that you are here. Mr. Kestell, I was wondering when I could see you to-day ; but I would much rather see you out here. I want to speak to you about——"

"About Elva ?" said Mr. Kestell, hastily, seeing Akister paused. The old man was quite himself again, and the kindly look returned to his eyes. "My dear fellow, I think I can guess your meaning. Indeed, yours has been a very faithful affection, very unlike——"

"Don't mention that scoundrel. I do not wish to be a murderer ; but I was sorely tempted to leave him to his fate on Christmas Day. He is gone, gone for good, and I am heartily glad of it. If I have your leave, sir, I hope in time that Elva——"

Mr. Kestell eagerly grasped Walter's hand.

"Your father is a very old friend, Walter, and we have known you for years. I would not force my children's inclination ; but if Elva could forget that short, sad, unaccountable episode, nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see her your wife."

"If she can forget," said Walter, gloomily, "that is the question. You should have forced an explanation from him, sir. He should have been horsewhipped."

Evidently the savage tone grated on the old man, for he said, very gently :

"At my age, Akister, one has to restrain one's natural impulses. Besides, Fenner never gave me the chance. I have made careful enquiries, and I can hear nothing of him. He went abroad, and left no address."

"And Elva does not know ?"

"She is entirely ignorant——"

Walter kept his own counsel.

"May I tell Elva it is your wish ?"

"By all means. Nay, more, I will tell her so myself, Akister. I will do everything to forward your wishes. Elva is young. My greatest happiness will be to see her get over this sad trouble."

Walter shook the hand held out to him ; and, without further conversation, he turned away and plunged again into the upland forest and disappeared.

"It must be soon," said Mr. Kestell to himself, "very soon. In that case, all might still be well. Poor child, it will be better for her in the future. Walter is not the man to care for anything but her. If Fenner had been like that——ah !"

Then he fell to musing again about Elva, till—though it was by no means hot—beads of perspiration stood on his brow, and it was painful to see the way in which the nerves started forward and had the appearance of being knotted and swollen.

"Such a small thing—such a small thing," he said, looking once more at the black water ; "if I had to begin again, should I do otherwise ? They can see my account-books and judge for themselves. I have spent the whole, and more than the whole on them, and now they are ungrateful."

He did not know how long he stayed here, only he guessed by the way the mist had all cleared away, and the sun had come forth in all its brilliancy, that it was getting on towards the early lunch time. He would not look at his watch, having a faint idea of saying that he did not know the time, and this care, to keep to the literal truth, made him smile at himself.

"One cannot be too particular," he said, aloud, and with these almost puerile thoughts he walked home along the road by the Pools. On the bridge he saw Elva. She was looking out towards the high road, and did not see him till he called her.

"Elva ! Well, darling ?"

"Papa, how did you come here ? Why, you will be in time for lunch. That is nice, for I am all alone."

"What is the time, dear ? I never looked at my watch. How is your mother ?"

"Why that's just it, papa. She is fast asleep now, and Ellen is with her. I came to see if Amice had sent a telegram. I told her to let me know if a nurse were coming."

What, that again ! Must he always have everything against him ?

"A nurse! What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know, papa. Amice has taken Symee away to her brother, and how we are to manage I don't know I am sure. Amice said you knew all about it."

"I—I know?" he stammered.

How much did Elva know?

"Yes. Have you forgotten? She told you. Amice said so. She is so particular."

"Well."

Mr. Kestell spoke dreamily, and Elva looked at him anxiously. Lately her father had seemed sometimes not to understand quickly what was said.

"It seems Vicary is in trouble, and Symee feels she must go. She cried very much, poor girl; but it is better, of course, to be on the safe side. One would be sorry if she were unhappy here."

Mr. Kestell waved his hand slightly, as if the subject were of no importance.

"Elva, I have just met Walter Akister."

Elva blushed painfully.

"Did he speak to you, too, papa?"

"Yes, to me, too, darling."

"But you said nothing?"

"I said it was the dearest wish of my life; and, darling, I have, I may have, very few more years to live."

"How can you speak so? No, no, love is not for me; it cannot be after—what has taken place."

"My poor child! But do not fancy that a young heart can never recover. Sad and terrible as was the ordeal, surely you cannot think of him now in any light but one that is unfavourable."

"Papa, don't speak of it. Sometimes I feel as if I must hate him, as if I do hate him; but then at other times all the old feeling comes back. Papa, papa!"

The flood-gate of reserve was open, and Elva gave way.

"Hush, darling," he said, in a voice of infinite tenderness, "this distresses me extremely."

Elva tried to quiet herself but failed.

"It is a living death. I would do anything to get out of it. If I only knew—if I had some reason. I would not mind then, papa; indeed, I would try and bear it. I do now. I have been brave; I have tried new occupations, new interests, and all of it is like dust in my mouth; it all revolts me. I want only to know—just to know. Papa, you have had such a happy life. You have always had the one you loved near you. You cannot tell what it is. It

is like a great madness coming down upon me. I go about saying the same thing over and over again. Let me know. Never mind what the reason may be, let me know it."

"Hush, hush, darling," he said, and leaning against the bridge, he put his trembling arm round her. "Don't say that. It may be that—that if you knew—if we knew—you might wish your present ignorance back again. Try some other remedy; try, Elva, for my sake, to love the man who has loved you so long and so faithfully."

"Papa, papa, do you wish it? No, no, I cannot."

"My child, do you know—no, you cannot know—how much I suffer, and have suffered, for you? If I could clear this up, I would; but as it must remain a mystery, will it not be a great comfort to me to see you the wife of a man who loves you devotedly? How can I die, and feel that the child who is so dear to me has no one to turn to for comfort, no one to—"

"Please don't speak like that, papa, you will live a long time, and I shall at least feel that if I have lost his love, I have been able to give you more, if that is possible."

Mr. Kestell shook his head.

"I feel that any day I may be—that something may happen to me. Indeed, Elva, this terrible uncertainty about you may hasten this result. To know you happily married would—yes, I feel sure would add years to my life."

"Papa!"

"Yes, darling; I do not suppose it, even, I am sure of it. Your troubles are undermining my health, my peace of mind."

Elva drew a long breath. How terrible of her father to put it thus; he could not know, he could not understand what he was asking of her.

"But, papa, I do not love him. How can I promise to do so? Besides—"

And in her heart she cried out: "Hoel, Hoel, only tell me, and then I could judge whether it were wicked of me, even for my father's sake, to think of such a thing."

"No, dearest, yours is a true, noble nature, I do not expect you to change easily. But when love is gone, there are many softer feelings which, on the whole—who knows?—may make us happier than passionate love. It is not a love marriage that is always the happiest."

"But yours, papa—look at that."

There was a slight contraction of the muscles about his mouth.

"Mine has been no common love, certainly."

"I want to be like you. But Walter, papa, he is so easily angry; I am sure we could never agree."

"He loves you, dear. Think of that! Will not that counterbalance some few infirmities of nature? Are there many men who would come forward, as he has done, and, careless of what is said, at once declare that he loves you and will marry you now at once?"

Elva drew herself up proudly.

"Whatever people say, papa, about us—about me and you—is pure gossip. At least, Kestell of Greystone's daughter has nothing to be ashamed of, except for others."

"Yes, for others; but, dearest, about Walter. Will you not listen to my pleading for him?"

"For yourself, papa. It will be for you if I do it. Only, if—if— And yet how can I? If I do, you must teach me to hate him—Hoel—always; not now and then, but always. As the wife of another, how can I have that other feeling?"

"As the wife of another, Kestell of Greystone's daughter will do her duty," he said, proudly; then, suddenly, a faint flush covered his face.

"Will you think of it, dear—for my sake?"

There was a long pause. A terrible struggle went on in Elva's heart. At last she said:

"For your sake, papa. I love you so very much."

"And you will do this for me?"

There came the booming sound of a gong across the bridge, and both stood upright.

Elva felt like a hunted animal. She had fancied herself so safe, taking care of her father; and now he himself was pleading so earnestly against himself.

"If you were Walter's wife you would live here. Yes, child, at Rushbrook; we need then never part—till death."

"I cannot decide now," she said, almost angrily.

"Then to-night, to-night, my darling, give me your answer; believe me—your father—when I say that that other love is dead, dead, and it can never return; and this one is a true affection, I know it is, a true love; no obstacle will deter Walter Akister. I can understand that sort of love; the other was very different."

"Yes, yes," said Elva to herself, "oh, so different, he was my love; he might have had faults, but he was noble, and great, and brave, and gentle. Hoel—Hoel!"

Aloud she could only whisper:

"I cannot promise anything; but I will tell you my answer to-night."

Amice was gone, Mr. Kestell slowly took that in, and she had carried off Symee. What would his wife say? He hardly dared ask this question, and feared to go upstairs.

"I will have lunch, first, with you, dearest," he said to Elva; and Elva, forcing herself to eat something, tried not to show any feeling before the servants. Yet there was a strange hush everywhere. This was at last broken by the arrival of a fly containing a trained nurse—a pretty, bright young woman.

"Go and introduce her to your mother, Elva," said Mr. Kestell, and Elva, glad to get away, did so.

After a little time the old man nerved himself to follow, and, to his surprise, a new and brighter look was on his wife's face.

"My dear Josiah, what a comfort to have a pleasanter face about me. Symee has given me the blues lately. This Hodson is quite a relief."

So, after all his scheming to keep Symee, he discovered she was not regretted.

When Amice came back she found no one spoke a word about her absence, except Elva, who clung to her.

"Amice, my own sister, when you hear something, do not think badly of me. It is for papa's sake."

Amice did not understand, her mind was full of what she had seen in town.

That evening, Elva said, as her father's arm was round her:

"Papa, for your sake, I will, for your sake; but—tell him yourself, I cannot."

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